



MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Held Wednesday, June 2, 1999

For the purpose of meeting with representatives of area newspapers.

The meeting began at 8:13 p.m. It was held in the Multi-Purpose Room of the Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Council members Edward V.J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts, Alan Turnbull Thomas X. White and Mayor Judith F. Davis.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; David E. Moran, City Clerk; Bev Palau, Public Information and Communications Coordinator; James Craze, Police Chief; and Britt Cave, Police Officer

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Sheldon Goldberg, GEAC; Don Comis, Citizen; Susan Saulny & Sarah Mark, Washington Post; MaryLou Williamson, News Review; Karl Hille, The Gazette; Lea Greve, Prince George's Post;

Mayor Davis began by welcoming everyone to the meeting. She explained the stakeholder meeting program. Mr. McLaughlin made a presentation on regular publications that the City produces.

Chief Craze introduced Officer Cave and explained the Department's approach to producing the weekly report and indicated it was available upon request. Mayor Davis noted this had been a source of concern and asked the newspaper representatives to explain the procedures they use in how they edit and publish this information.

Mr. White asked about structuring the report so that municipal and county police departments are identified separately. Ms. Mark stated that everything they get they print. She noted that Prince George's County was not providing a complete report.

Council discussed the absence of Greenbelt's report for many months in the Washington Post and the paragraph that it was running about Greenbelt. Council asked that the Post cover other municipalities and noted that there were approximately 17 other municipal police forces which were not being covered. Ms. Mark responded that the Post would look at this issue.

Mr. Turnbull suggested that the Post distinguish between County districts and Municipalities which might have the same name. Ms. Mark responded that this was another issue that they could look into.

Mr. Roberts stated that the Council was looking at this issue the wrong way and believed that the City should provide this information to the Post as a service to the residents of Greenbelt. Ms. Mark agreed that the report was an important crime prevention component.

Mr. White suggested that the Post encourage the County and other jurisdictions to model their reports after Greenbelt's standard.

Mr. Putens stated that he had been receiving complaints from residents about list of crimes for Greenbelt versus other jurisdictions. He stressed that the Post needed to treat jurisdictions equally. Mayor Davis stressed that if the Post was able to note which jurisdictions did not have report available that this would go a long way towards solving the problem.

Mr. Comis suggested that the city needed a written policy on this issue and suggested that the Council allow the Police Department to establish the policy. He favored returning to the pre-September policy of providing reports to any outlet that wants them.

Mayor Davis asked the media representatives to explain their coverage procedures. Mr. Hille noted that he was the only reporter covering Greenbelt and Berwyn Heights. Ms. Greve responded that the Sentinel only had three reporters for the whole County. She appreciated the agendas sent by the city. Ms. Saulney indicated that the Post reviews agendas and other materials and determines if a reporter/photographer should be assigned. Ms. Mark, Washington Post, announced a new community calendar. Ms. Williamson responded that the News Review gets information directly from City staff and other residents. She expressed concern about work sessions where the topic was listed as "to be announced." Ms. Williamson also noted that the News Review often deals with "lack of space" problems.

Mayor Davis stressed that reporters were always welcome at Council meetings and encouraged the media representatives to contact staff if they need information.

Next, Council discussed the issue of articles identifying an incident in Greenbelt that actually occurred well outside of Greenbelt. The media representatives responded that accuracy was important to them and asked that the City notify them of any incorrect information.

Mr. Turnbull stressed that Greenbelt was a City with borders and urged the representatives to help with this.

Mayor Davis asked if the representatives had any problems covering Greenbelt. Some of the representatives expressed a desire to receive more information about city events. Ms. Palau suggested sending out flyers to the media for upcoming events.

Mr. White suggested that the media representatives also obtain information from the Maryland Municipal League, Prince George's Municipal Association, Council of Governments and the National League of Cities.

Mr. Turnbull stressed that many unique things happened outside City government such as: activities by formal and informal community organizations, cooperative businesses and the historic district study.

Mayor Davis thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

The meeting ended at 9:57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

David E. Moran,
CMC City Clerk